

GILES AND JANEY;

OR,

THE KINDLY GENTLEMAN.

A CANADIAN TALE.

BY

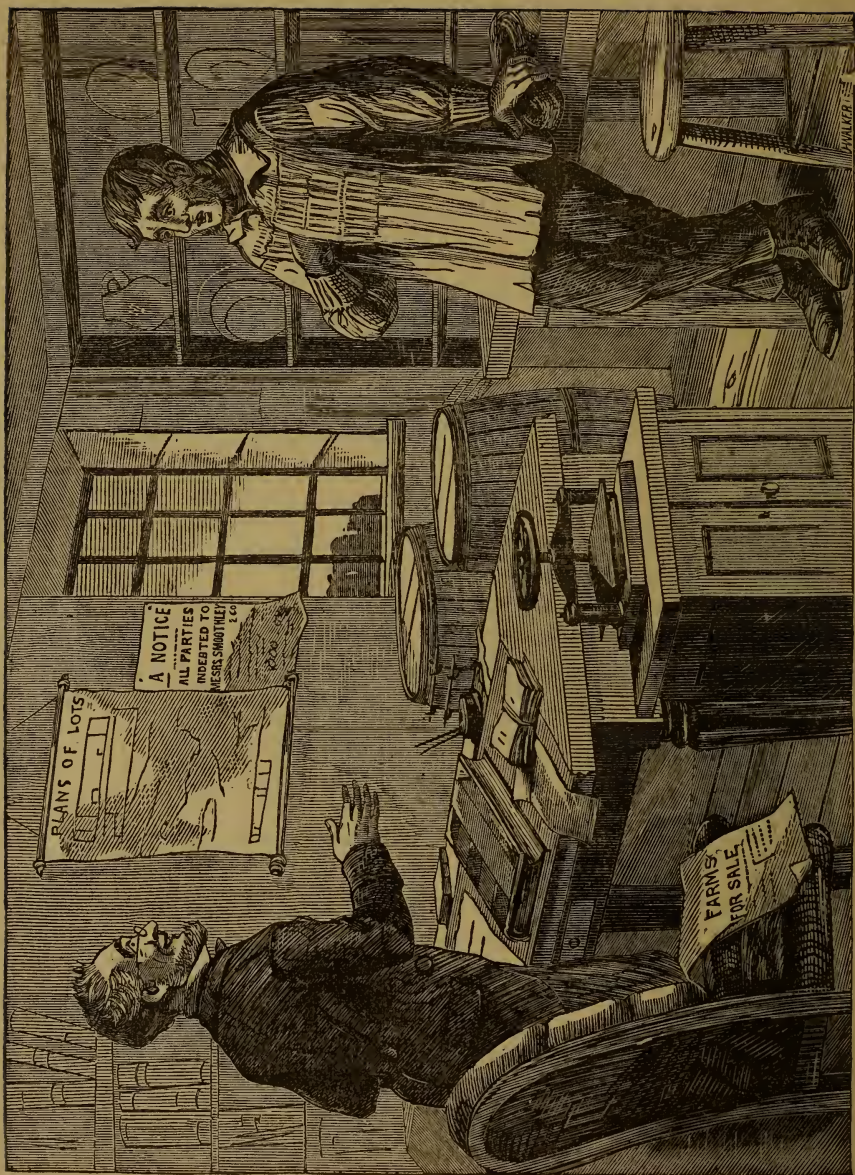
FRANK JOHNSON,

OF LONDON, ENG.

SECOND EDITION.



MONTREAL:
PRINTED BY JOHN LOVELL, ST. NICHOLAS STREET.
1872.



"My simple, honest Sir," said he, "you don't, sure, understand; You're in the Eastern Townships, mind,—not in your native land; All things are here so different !—you really must show sense,—

A pound is sixteen shillings here, a shilling fifteen pence ! In some, indeed, in many ways black almost rules for white, It takes, I know, a year or two to see things in that light;

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DEDICATION.

To such of the Traders and Dealers of Canada as are too wise and too proud to take advantage of the greenness of a raw and unsophisticated Immigrant the following poem is, with the sincerest respect, addressed by its author.

The author begs to add, that in the characters of Smoothley and Giles Homespun, no particular parties are, either directly or remotely, aimed at. As to Smoothley, the cap is for one and for all whom it may fit: no honest man need be at the trouble of trying it on.

Sept. 2, 1867.

TO THE TRADERS AND DEALERS OF CANADA.

GENTLEMEN,

In issuing a second edition of "Giles and Janey," I cannot resist the opportunity of tendering you my best thanks for the kindly encouragement it has met with at your hands since its first issue. In this encouragement you have not only been an assistance to its author, but you have shown how generously, and to the full, you appreciate the high, and sole motive that prompted its publication. Assuredly I hold in small esteem, poetry which has in it nothing by the help of which a man may be made both happier and nobler. It is, believe me, from a keen sense of my indebtedness to you that I have taken no ordinary pains that, in this its re-issue, my poem shall, in every respect, be thought worthy of your attention and preservation.

I have the honor to be,

Gentlemen,

Your Obedient Servant

FRANK JOHNSON.

ROMILLY FARM,

Ascot, Eastern Townships, P.Q., Canada.

Sept. 2, 1872.

GILES AND JANEY ;

OR

THE KINDLY GENTLEMAN,

A CANADIAN TALE.

Still a stranger I a'most,—but a season I'd been out,—
And for weeks scarce half at work, put terrible about,
Well I mind me o' the day, the cold jest settin' in,
I stept into a store where I'd 'casionally been,
And a' seein' as the measter wur a likely lookin' man,
“Can't help one, Sir?” says I—“God's blessin', if you can;
I'm sadly, Sir, put out,—if you hev it in your power?—
If only a few trifles, Sir, in trust like for the hour?
'T went hard with I a beggin' like, yet what wur to be done,
Real hunger at my heels!—and I waun't the only one;
'T went hard with I, indeed,—fore I'd fairly got me through
I wur aal a prispiration, knees nigh a knockin', too;
More'n once I'd tarned to leave, but I know'd that wouldn't do;
So, I held my own, a wonderin' as how the thing'd be;
Them as has tried it only knows how hard went this with me.
—“You'll—wait awhile, my man,” the gentleman replied,
Measter Smoothly o' the store, a magistrate beside,
“Can't possibly just now,—but—here again by one,
Or—earlier indeed—p'rhaps—something may be done;
My partner, as it happens, not at present in the way,
Puts everything on me quite pressingly to day;—
Your name though, by the bye?”—“Giles Homespun, Sir,” I said,
—“O—h—Homespun by the bridge,—your father lately dead?
“The same, Sir,”—and, now, it wur beautiful to see,
When he larnt as I wur *Homespun*, the odds it made to me;
He owned at once to knowin' me,—he'd heerd, too, o' my wife,
And he never lost, he woold say, by a Homespun in his life;

He bade un to be seated,—now, us sarcumstood that,
 So, I whistled, as I waited, till he done what he wur at ;
 When straight the kindly gentleman, for kindly, sure, he seemed,
 More generous, by half, than ever I had dreamed,
 Came smilingly assentin' to aal as I desired,
 Nay, pressin' on me things not 'xactly jest required,
 Assurin' I us needn't give a thought about the pay
 Till fortune, in a manner like, might put it in one's way ;
 He'd never been a loser by a Homespun, as he'd said,
 And he couldn't see as in my case was anything to dread ;
 So, present wants supplied, I thank'd'n for his aid,
 And homeward to my wife a jiyful journey made.
 —“ How kindly o' the man, how christianlike !” I said,
 “ What a gentleman 'll do, if only thorough bred ;
 Were fortune's fav'rites aal but half as good as he,
 How happy, Jane, throughout, this little world might be.”
 A thousand times us bless'd'n, and when the night time came,
 My Jane and I togither knelt, togither said the same,
 And never prayer from moartal heart sincerer went to heaven,
 That if the man had still his faults, that sich moight be forgiven.
 —And ah, us yet had got to larn the kindnesses in store,
 He waun't o' they whose hearts, mebbe, warm once, and never more ;
 By the noon, next day, a messenger from the goodly man arrived,
 And aal about a little job as he kindly had contrived ;
 And any thing as my wife or I wur a wantin' at the store,
 So thoughtful ! us were welcome to as freely as afore ;
 His terms, too, full as generous as the times jest then allowed,
 And he'd picked I out in priffrence, it seemed, from quite a crowd :
 So, I went to work, and worked as I never yet had done,
 My proudest to be found in the field afore the sun ;
 “ If any thing,” says I to Jane, “ our gratitude can show,
 ’T is now the time like caals on us, to do aal us can do.”
 Not lost on Measter Smoothly this, which it heartened me to see,
 In many a gracious sunny look as the good man cast at me,
 And rarely came the restin' hour but I agin wur told,
 Whatsomeiver might be wantin', I had only to make bold.
 But as aal our little plans and schemes but thrift could bring about,
 For nothing, trust, sought I the store as care could do without ;
 Which, bit by bit, a balance wrought us proudly hoped woold buy

A footin' on a little farm as us wur living nigh ;
 So many things were needed, too,—scarce nothing of our own,
 Save some few sheep, and one small cow, what kept the road grass down.

Well—time ran on, the kindly man, and I, from day to day,
 Exchangin' like, till he, in tarn, some pounds had got to pay ;
 When Janey more'n gave a hint her thaught it time to settle,
 Perhaps I thaught as Janey did, but hadn't got the mettle ;
 I couldn't bear to press the man't had been so good and kind,
 As even he, I heerd, at times, a little wur behind ;
 But, still, a whisperin', more'n more, as Janey wur aright'
 I mustered aal my courage up as folks do for a fight,
 And summat to the countin' house less cowardly I stole,
 With—" A little, Sir, 'll do me now,—I doan't, Sir, want the whole."
 " The whole, my friend!—the whole !" says he,—the whole's the other way,—
 I'm sadly out if *some one* hasn't a pound or two to *pay*.
 'T wur part in anger, part in grief, as I give a sudden start,
 When first I saw as the kindly man wur holler in his heart ;
 " A pound or two to *pay*," says I,—“ that can't be *no how* true,
 If figures, Sir, mean anything, the pay must lie with you.”
 " My simple, honest Sir," said he, " you don't, sure, understand ;
 You're in the Eastern Townships, mind,—not in your native land ;
 All things are here so different !—you really must show sense,—
 A pound is sixteen shillings here, a shilling fifteen pence !
 In some, indeed, in many ways black almost rules for white,
 It takes, I know, a year or two to see things in that light ;
 Be seated, pray,—time presses,—still,—a few mere moments wait,
 I'll—look into the little thing, and—set the matter straight.
 A bigly book, from leaf to leaf, with charchlike face, he tarded,
 When clear I saw, at every lift, how less and less I'd arned ;
 There wur interest in the first place, and interest in the second,
 Aye, interest upon interest, Loard knows how often, reckoned ;
 A summat hard in every way,—a famine price for flour !
 To settle up aal the summats took nigh upon an hour ;
 For sorely tasked was I, throughout, t'unfold his figuriffics,
 " One might as well at once " says I " keep counts in hirergliffics,"
 Not that, unschooled, he scribbled thus, more art than iggorance there,
 Many a baffled brain, he know'd, woold back out in despair ;
 Sad sad, too, I, to note the names, with mine, in sich sharp quarters,
 It made I think, and more'n once, o' Fox's " Book o' Martyrs " !

How any man, it staggered one, could trust hisself to slumber,
 With sich a damning caterlogue o' *doings* without number ;
 Dishonesty, and meanness worse, distortured every leaf,
 " If this," says I, " be laaful trade, let trader stand for thief :
 Nothing as I had done, throughout, wur entered at a rate
 As agreed upon atwixt us, or in order as to date ;
 And scores o' things, as I sold he, wur posted at a price
 As p'inted to a memory, for sartain, not too nice.
 In vain did I dismonstrate, my temper scarce retained,
 The book alone knowed anything, the book alone explained ;
 A word against it's 'thority seemed tantamount to libel,
 " We've nothing but the *book*, Giles," as if un meant the Bible !
 —A second 'spicious lookin' thing lay close aside o' t'other,
 It puzzled I to note how this so, somehow, backed its brother ;
 And aal'ays on the one board,—no need to mention which,
 T' have caught it upon t'other tack had passed for summat rich.
 " And now, my man, you'll see " says he, " precisely how we stand,"
 And then a paper, folded twice, he slips into my hand,
 " Just fifteen dollars coming us, some few cents more or less,
 Short, Giles, by five, just five, of what I'd put it, at a guess ;
 I'm glad, indeed, I'm very glad you've given us a call,
 We do—so want—these little things—all—settled up this fall ;
 It struck me—your account,—but—let it—let it stand,—
 There always will be something, Giles, that slips the head or hand ;
 You'll not, Giles, kick at that, eh ?"—and here the generous man
 Giv' one o' them especial smiles as only sich folks can :
 I waun't say whether showed my face what then was in my mind,
 The looks o' injured honest men bean't aften far behind ;
 I done my best to hide it, but my brain was on the burst,
 And terrible I struggled to speak civilly at first ;
 " Pray when " says I, " Sir, 'specks you this diff'rence to be paid,
 I've nothing now in hand, Sir, and for some time, I'm afraid***—
 " I'm sorry I'm obliged," said he, " to seem a little hard,
 But things—with us—of late,—in fact—a good deal off our guard ;
 But still—we're never pressing, Giles,—if cash—is scarce with you,
 The *cow*—we're not *particular*,—the cow, perhaps, might do ;—
 A tolerable milker, Giles ?—though—as to that—of course,
 A pig, Giles, in a poke, for better or for worse ;—
 I'm thinking too—I'm thinking—of a party—p'rhaps—who might ;—

The party was, indeed, to have called on us to-night ;
 At all events—we'll see—to oblige you,—by the bye,
 Now I recall,—our own,—I think,—must be—yes—nearly dry ;
 We'll say then—in a day or two ;—and, Giles, should *you* be out,
 Your wife of course will know, Giles, of the business we're about."
 To this I made no answer, but simply hung my head ;—
 It seemed as if a summat had struck I aalmost dead.
 " Come, come, my friend " said he, " an honest man need never
 Be out of heart,—the store's—as free to you as ever ;—
 If any little thing, now,—for yourself,—or for your wife,—
 I never was, to say, *particular*—in my life."
 No answer, still—he neared me,—clapped his hand upon my shoulder,
 In a way as woold a fearther,—or a some un even older ;
 But I could see beneath the guise as craft wur puttin' on,
 And I waited for a chance till the wicked man had done,
 When a lookin' at'n straight,—for I waun't the least o' shy,
 With aal the strength I coold,—“ Measter Smoothley, Sir ” says I,
 I'm but a lowly man, and but little of a scholar,
 Quite possible as I couldn't cast the int'rest on a dollar ;
 But take thou heed lest when to thee *thy* last account be given,
 The interest *thou* wooldt have to pay doan't shut thee out o' Heaven.”
 This seemed, I thought, to stagger'n,—though I doan't much hold by looks,
 But he, sartaintly,—wur paler,—when he tarned'n to his *books* !
 Ah, why, when hieing homeward, on the roadway did I linger,
 Why loiter at my door, with the latch still on my finger ;
 Too well I know'd the trouble as was waitin' on my wife,
 Ah, then it was I tasted o' the bitterness o' life :
 By the half tear in my eye,—by the heavin' o' my breast,
 That a summat there wur wrong my Janey quickly guessed ;
 She took me in her arms,—she looked me in the face,—
 “ Full well I know,” says she, “ thou art not in disgrace ; ”
 And when I told her aal as the gentleman had done,
 Her stroked like back my hair, and as woold an angel one,
 “ Then will ” says she “ they take thee———— ” her couldn't say the word,
 But in the look she giv' me 't wur plainly to be heard.
 “ No no, my Jane,” says I, “ but, much I fear, the *cow*
 Wool go to pay a debt us never owed till now ;
 A way, mebbe, o' laaing him, but then the fees I grudge,
 And I heerd, too, as the chap's first cousin to the judge ! ”

"First cousin, Giles, to *something else!*" my angered wife replied,
As sat us down to our scanty meal,—when bitterly her cried!

And 'fore the runnin' moon wur round the dreaded man appeared!
Christ! when I saw'n comin' how I quivered like, afeard!

"Lord help us, Jane," says I—"he's bent upon the *cow!*"

"What a gentleman can do, Giles, another picture now?"

"Doan't, doan't" says I," Jane, doan't—t'il drive I clean to laaw,"

Where, with our small means to face'n, but little chance I saw;

"Say something to him, still," says she, "a word sometimes will do—"

As well might I ha' prated to the passin' wind that blew;

To nothing wou'd he listen, not a moment wou'd he wait,

More'n heavy was my brow, as I follered to the gate!—

A tryin' tryin' moment!—folks bean't made aal o' clay,

But my home like held me back,—so,—the dark thought went away!

I leaned upon the gate till the man wur out o' sight,

And my brain was nigh a splittin' by the comin' on o' night!

When a downin' by the bed where Jane I had knelt

And *bless'd* the kindly gentleman, I spoke out as I felt!

'T waun't blessins' *now*, be sure,—bean't sartain *t'other way*,

May the Loard o' heaven forgive me, if I know'd not how to pray;—

My heart was full o' anger,—I'd ha' giv' the world to cry,—

The lonesomeness about us!—and the way Jane looked at I!

But God—the goodly God!—upon that very night

Did I sleep it out as soundly as had everything been right,

And afore the morrow's noon, not conscious o' no sin,

Came an angel summat o'er me, like a comforter within;

So, I went unto my Janey,—she wur sorrowin' alone,

And I tried to lift her bosom to the level o' my own,

"I'll still" says I, "Jane, do for thee the very best I can,

And leave to tide and time that *kindly gentleman.*"

